

MINISTRY OF

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**ALLOTMENT
AND*****Garden Guide***

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"April, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears."



IF April lives up to that reputation, she will please readers of this Guide, though we shall look to her to be judicious in her weeping. We shall want useful spells of sunny weather throughout this busy gardening month. But let us sound a word or two of warning. Good Friday is the traditional day for potato planting; but the wise gardener knows that it's risky to stick to traditions: he pays more attention to soil and weather conditions. And although we shall be only too anxious to get on with arrears of clearing up, digging, seed sowing and planting, we shall find that "hasten slowly" is still sound advice when soil conditions are not right.

Getting on with the job

But once weather and soil are right, we should take time by the forelock and get on with the job—not leaving everything to the week-end, if we can help it, but seizing any opportunity of an evening—when it's fine—to put in a little time on essential work on the plot. Little and often will help us along far better than crowding a lot into the week-end that may turn out wet. But, of course, we

may yet be far off from those happy, free peace-time evenings.

DON'T DELAY THINNING

In Spring, though, many little jobs come along that need to be done when the time is right. A few days' delay may spoil things: thinning seedlings, for instance; a wet week-end makes the young seedlings romp away. More about thinning next month.

HOE OFTEN

April is certainly the time for using the Dutch hoe regularly and often. Hoe freely—just the surface, not deeply—between all growing crops and on vacant ground on every favourable occasion. Try, if you can, to move all ground at least every ten days when growth is active, so as to maintain a loose surface mulch and keep down weeds.

Now here are some reminders for this month:—



REMINDERS

In the first three issues of this "Guide" you were reminded about getting all your seeds in good time—your fertilisers, too, as well as pea and bean sticks. One "seed" item not so far mentioned is *swedes*. Though you can sow swedes as early as April, the Ministry's cropping plan, which suggests two rows, recommends sowing in June. Swedes are often successful in districts where it is not so easy to grow carrots, and the field varieties resist the cold



PRESS FIRM

better than turnips. Swedes are usually sown in mid-June in the south, though in the north they may be safely sown earlier. More will be said about swedes in a later Guide.

Have a look at your *shallots*.

You may have planted them a little too loosely and the weathering may have left them almost bare of soil. Firm them in now.

Now a word or two about *tomatoes*. Of course, you won't think of planting them out until the end of May or the first week in June; but if you have not done so, you would

be wise to put in your order for plants with a reliable supplier. Be warned: don't buy plants that you see for sale much earlier than they should be. You will be disappointed if you buy them.

And what about Brussels sprouts? These need a long period of growth. If you have not sown seeds in the seedbed and you intend growing them, you should order your plants so that you are not caught napping when you want to plant them out in May or June. And now is the time, if you have not already done so, to clear away those old cabbage and other green stumps that may be taking up ground that should be cleared and dug over ready for a following crop. For one thing, these old stumps harbour pests; but, even more important, if you let them stop until they flower, you may well do harm by cross-pollination to the crops of the professional man who is growing them for valuable seed.

Now for the seed-sowing jobs of the month, remembering that a few days before sowing or planting (except on the seed bed) 1 lb. of a good complete fertiliser—"National Growmore" for instance—should be scattered evenly over every 10 sq. yds. and raked in.

BEANS

DWARF AND HARICOT

The Ministry's cropping plan provides for two rows of dwarfs. The plants of dwarfs are tender and should not be sown in the open until mid-April in the south and mid-May in the north. Successive batches can be sown until mid-July. Rows should be 2 ft. or 2½ ft. apart, with 9 in. between plants. Use a dibber, or draw a shallow trench with a hoe, about 2 in. deep. If you put two seeds at each interval you can reckon on a regular stand. Pull out the unwanted weaker plant, when sufficiently advanced. A light mulching of the surface with lawn mowings, decayed leaves or compost will help to keep the plants growing.

If you grow haricots for storing, you proceed as for dwarfs, but you don't pick any green pods. How you deal with them will be dealt with in a later Guide.

BEET

The official cropping plan provides for two rows of Globe Beet. The globe variety matures quickly and is suitable for general cultivation. It is easier to boil in the usual kitchen pot than the longer varieties—a point that the missus will appreciate. Sow globe crops in April, longer varieties in May. Drills should be 1½ to 2 in. deep and at least 1 ft. apart. Sow seeds in small clusters 6 in. apart, to avoid waste, and thin the plants to one when three leaves have formed. A few strands of black cotton stretched above the rows will protect the seedlings from troublesome birds.

CABBAGES

The Ministry's cropping plan does not include cabbages for use in summer and early autumn, except as an alternative to runner beans in

cold districts. If you have enough room, however, and you would like a choice of green vegetables in late summer, sow a row now in the seedbed (see page 3 of March Guide).

CARROTS

The first sowing of carrots—a stamp-rooted kind—(to provide roots for summer and autumn) should be made in early April. The storage crop is best sown in May or early June. If sown early, thinnings may be pulled and used as early carrots without harming the rest of the crop; but the ground must be made firm again after thinning out, to reduce the danger of carrot fly attack. A late sowing in mid-July will provide tender young carrots for use the following spring (April—May).

Sow seed thinly in drills drawn 1 ft. apart and 1 in. deep. As carrot seed is small, mix a little dry earth or sand to avoid too thick sowing, which wastes seed and means a good deal of thinning. First thin in the seedling stage and keep the bed free from weeds by frequent use of the hoe. Plants should finally be 6 in. apart.

LETTUCE

Continue to sow a short row (¼ in. deep) every fortnight, to make sure of crops in succession. (See March Guide, page 4).

PEAS

The March Guide (page 4) dealt with the sowing of peas. This is just to remind you to sow maincrop peas in April. For late crops you can sow such varieties as Little Marvel and Onward as late as June. Unless your soil is in very good heart, a top dressing of superphosphate—2 ounces per square yard—at blossom time helps the pods to swell.



As soon as the peas begin to make their third pair of leaves, they will be ready for sticking. Even dwarf peas do better with a little support—a few twigs are all that is necessary. Before sticking, hoe the ground beside the rows and remove any weed seedlings showing between the plants, as they will be more difficult to get at when the sticks are in. Don't cross the two rows of sticks at the top, as this usually makes the plants get tangled in a mass; stick them firmly in the ground—upright. Trim the tops and put the twiggy trimmings in at the bottom by the larger sticks, so that the young plants can grasp them first before climbing on to the sticks.



POTATOES

Potato planting was dealt with in the March Guide (page 6). April is the month for planting varieties other than "earlies".

RADISHES

Don't forget to sow them little and often, if you like them. Sow very thinly and there will be no need to thin the seedlings. A useful idea is to sow a few radish seeds in the drills along with onions, carrots and beet. Plant one seed every 6 in. or so along the drills; they grow quickly and show you the line of the drill before the other seeds germinate. Hoeing and weeding can then begin earlier.

SPINACH

The Ministry's cropping plan provides for inter-cropping three rows of dwarf peas with two rows of spinach, if you like it. Gardeners on light soils, however, find that summer spinach runs to seed so quickly unless they kept it well watered.

Some wartime gardeners may be a bit confused yet about spinach, spinach beet and seakale beet. Spinach may be sown both in spring (March to May) and late summer (August). Drills should be 1 in. deep and 15 in. apart. In autumn or early winter, spinach beet supplies leaves that take the place of spinach in autumn or early winter. It is also known as "Perpetual Spinach" and some people prefer it. The drills should be 18 in. apart. You can sow it in April and again in July.

Seakale beet is also known as "Silver Beet" or "Swiss Chard." It is a dual-purpose vegetable. The leaf stems are large and white, but the leaf is green. You can cook the green part of the leaves as spinach and the white stalks and mid-ribs, stripped of foliage, may be cooked like seakale. You can sow this in

April, too—drills 1 in. deep and 18 in. apart. Later on, you thin the seedlings as you would with spinach or spinach beet. With the last two, you thin out to 3 in. apart in the first instance, removing alternate seedlings after about a fortnight. With sea-kale beet, the first thinning should be to 4 in. apart, finally leaving about 8 in. between plants.

TURNIPS

You can sow turnips in April. But if you are following the Ministry's cropping plan, you will wait until July, so we will deal with this crop in a later Guide.

ONIONS

Now is the time to plant out *onions* raised under glass. Harden the plants off gradually and plant them out in rows 1 ft. apart, leaving 6 in. between each plant. See that each bulb is set just on top of the ground and press the soil firmly around its roots.

A REMINDER ABOUT THE FRUIT GARDEN

In the March Guide we reminded you about spring dressings for your fruit trees and the spraying of your fruit bushes with lime sulphur. April is the time, so just turn to page 8 of the March issue and refresh your memory.

About those PESTS

Wartime gardeners, who may have suffered badly from the ravages of pests, may well have thought that gardening is just one long discouraging fight. But the "old hands" know that is not so; they know, too, that by keeping their plots as clean as they can, and by taking early measures to cope with any marauders that may appear, they can do much to reduce their losses and keep the pests in check.

First, a few wise words about what you can do to prevent pest damage before you start to use insecticides. Strong plants are less likely to be destroyed—and you only get strong plants by good cultivation and manuring. You must not expect insecticides to make up for deficient cultivation and manuring. Another important step is to get rid of

the things that harbour pests: weeds, surplus seedbed plants, old brassica stumps and infested leaves. Growing the same crop on the same bed year after year also encourages pests, so that is another important reason for crop rotation. And then don't be finicky about hand-picking caterpillars when you do find them.

Some gardeners regard all creeping and flying things as foes. That is a mistake, for they include friends as well. Let us for a moment consider some of the insects you may find under and above ground. Of the "under-ground" enemies, there is first the wireworm: the commonest garden foe that particularly fancies potatoes, tomatoes and carrots. It is three-quarters of an inch long and has six legs. When you find it, break it in half or squash it.

Later on in life it turns into a "Click" beetle or "Skipjack"; it is called a "Click" because if you put in on its back it jumps to it with a click. If you suffer badly from wireworm, it is worth trying to trap them. An old potato makes a good trap, or three inches of old kale or Brussels stalk split down the middle. Put these traps a few inches below ground in spring, marking the spots with sticks. You can do a great deal to rid yourself of wireworm if you set traps regularly.

But don't mistake the centipede for a wireworm. You can tell the centipede by the number of its



WIREWORM TWICE ACTUAL SIZE



legs—a pair to every section of its body. Don't kill the centipede, for it goes for your enemies—small slugs, worms and insects. The friendly centipede moves very quickly, while the millepede—a nasty sort of chap—moves slowly, though he has got two pairs of legs to every section, as against the centipede's one. You cannot go far wrong if you kill the slow-movers and let the fast movers live. Anyhow, it's death to the millepede that attacks the roots of most of your plants!

CENTIPEDE **FAST MOVING FRIEND**



MILLEPEDE **SLOW MOVING ENEMY**



When you are getting the ground ready for planting in spring, look out for another enemy that works underground and attacks most crops—the leather jacket, the grub of the fly you call "Daddy Long Legs." One leather jacket can do much harm to many plants like lettuce and spinach, so you must kill him wherever you find him.

When the young plants begin to grow up, they meet new enemies—the chaps that do their work above ground. Most readers of



LEATHER JACKET

this Guide may have suffered from black fly, especially if they have grown broad beans. These black flies harm the plant by sucking the sap and injuring the tissues; if they are allowed to go on, they will spread from the shoot to the cluster of young bean pods and

spoil the whole crop. Now the black fly's bitterest foe is the lady-bird, but although she makes all her meals off black or green flies, she cannot cope with all of them. The black fly usually attacks the top of the plant first, just when it is beginning to flower, so pinch off the top to check it. The lady-bird won't mind. But if the black fly spreads despite your efforts—and the lady-bird's

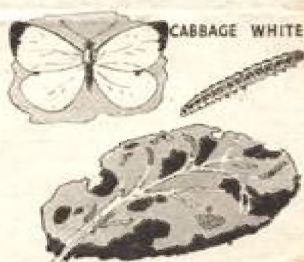


—act as advised at the end of this note, where hints are given for dealing also with slugs, caterpillars, flea beetles and the cabbage root fly. But first a word or two about these other pests that may come your way.

One of the dangers of leaving a lot of rubbish lying about the garden is that it harbours slugs that will attack your lettuce, so that is an argument in favour of a clean garden, with suitable rubbish put in its proper place—the compost heap—and unsuitable stuff burned.



Cabbage white butterflies are pests of the first order. It is bad enough to have to cope with our own native butterflies, but we also have to deal with the lot that fly over from the Continent every year. They come first in the spring and early summer, and leave us their eggs before they die. The eggs are laid on all kinds of cabbage crops, sometimes on stocks, nasturtiums and other plants. They are yellow, oval and pointed at one end. You will find the eggs in batches of 20 to 100; in about a fortnight they hatch out into young caterpillars that swarm together. You can tell them by their colour—bluish or greenish black, with a yellow line down the back and yellow sides. Their hairs are rather straggly. In about a month they are fed up—with your cabbages—and creep away to turn into chrysalides. About three weeks later, at the end of July or beginning of August, out come the butterflies which lay their eggs, and you get the second and more



dangerous lot of caterpillars that do harm in August and September.

The Cabbage White Butterfly has a pal—the small white butterfly that is responsible for the velvety green caterpillars. This butterfly lays her eggs one at a time and not in groups like the "Cabbage White." There is only one thing to do with any sort of caterpillar: pick them off and squash them. And squash any eggs you can find as well. It is a messy business, but it is worth it.

Another wretched pest is the cabbage aphid—the nasty greyish powder patches of insects that you may find on your plants. And then you may find holes in your young turnip leaves or in your young cabbages. They are the work of the flea beetle, which hops about so quickly that it is difficult to catch sight of. It eats the plant before it pops its head above the ground and keeps on with the foul work after the rough leaf appears.

Now here are the measures you are recommended to take for dealing with the most important pests that may come your way, though it is to be hoped they won't. And remember that early action may save you

a lot of bother later on.



FLEA BEETLE

SLUG: Destroy with well-mixed "Meta" bait; $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. with $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. slightly wet bran broadcast very thinly on soil—3 oz. per square rod—or dot small heaps over affected area.

CABBAGE CATERPILLAR

Dust plants at first sign of damage with Derris dust or spray with Derris insecticide. Repeat immediately more young caterpillars appear.



FLEA BEETLE

Dust seedlings with Derris, Nicotine or Naphthalene dust. Repeat two or three times at intervals of four days.

CABBAGE ROOT FLY



Prevent attack by putting $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonful of 4 per cent. Calomel dust on soil around each plant as soon as set out. Repeat a fortnight later.

BLACK FLY, GREEN FLY, CABBAGE APHIS

Spray with Derris or Nicotine wash. If sunny and warm, dust with Nicotine Dust. Destroy all old cabbage stumps before mid-May.

